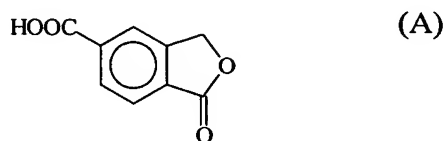


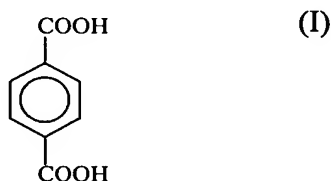
Amendments to the Claims:

1-21 (canceled)

22. (New) A process for the preparation of 5-carboxyphthalide of formula A



which comprises reacting formaldehyde and terephthalic acid of formula I



in fuming sulfuric acid containing at least 20% by weight of SO₃, heating the mixture at 120-145°C and isolating the 5-carboxyphthalide thus obtained.

23. A process according to claim 22, in which formaldehyde is used in form of its precursor 1,3,5-trioxane of formula II



24. A process according to claim 22, in which formaldehyde is used in form of its precursor paraformaldehyde.

25. A process according to claim 23, in which the 1,3,5-trioxane of formula II is used in an amount corresponding to 2.5-3.2 mol of formaldehyde/mol of the starting terephthalic acid.

26. A process according to claim 25, in which said 1,3,5-trioxane is added at a

temperature of 30-35°C.

27. A process according to claim 22, in which the fuming sulfuric acid contains 22-33% by weight of SO_3 .

28. A process according to claim 27, in which the fuming sulfuric acid is used in an amount of 3-6 litres/Kg of terephthalic acid.

29. A process according to claim 28, in which fuming sulfuric acid is used in an amount of about 3 litres/Kg of terephthalic acid.

30. A process according to claim 22, in which 5-carboxyphthalide is isolated by neutralization of the reaction mixture with a base.

31. A process according to claim 22, in which 5-carboxyphthalide is isolated by diluting the reaction mixture with glacial acetic acid, then adding water and neutralizing with a base.

32. A process according to claim 30 or 31, in which said base is an alkaline metal base.

33. A process according to claim 32, in which said alkaline metal base is sodium hydroxide, carbonate or bicarbonate.

34. A process according to claim 22, in which, at the end of the reaction, the 5-carboxyphthalide is isolated by the formation of a solution containing a salt thereof which is neutralized with an acid.

35. A process according to claim 34, in which said salt is the sodium salt.

36. A process according to claim 34, in which the salt is formed by adding the base to a pH of about 8.

37. A process according to claim 34, in which said acid is hydrochloric acid.

38. A process according to claim 22, in which 5-carboxyphthalide is isolated by treatment of the reaction mixture with water.
39. A process according to claim 38, in which the addition of water is made at 0-5°C and the exothermia is controlled by keeping the temperature at about 20-25°C.
40. A process according to claim 22, in which the mixture is heated at 130-135°C.
41. A process according to claim 22, in which formaldehyde is added to fuming sulfuric acid after the addition of terephthalic acid.
42. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 22.
43. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 23.
44. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 24.
45. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 25.
46. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 26.
47. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 27.
48. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 28.

49. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 29.
50. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 30.
51. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 31.
52. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 32.
53. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 33.
54. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 34.
55. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 35.
56. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 36.
57. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 37.
58. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 38.
59. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 39.

60. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 40.

61. A process for the synthesis of citalopram, comprising the process for the synthesis of 5-carboxyphthalide according to claim 41.